



# THERAPY NEWS

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## Neuroscience and Art

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Recent evidence in brain science backs the incorporation of art into therapy to provide a chance for folks to express their unique views of an event. Therapists can gather important data for treatment based on a client's account of their own personal experience. Various art materials can be used with drawing, sculpting or collage that provides a path for rich imagery to evoke implicit or

"emotional" memory in order to resolve a difficult life incident. These *living* memories are locked in by specially formed durable synapses in the brain's limbic system, which makes for the tenacity of emotional memories. However, new brain research has learned that these implicit memories can be unwired through experiential steps. Once art has opened up emotional (page 2)



*Art allows for emotional expression and healing through non-verbal means. Art shows the 'projected self' through the use of symbol and metaphor that provides a safe psychological distance that speeds the therapeutic process. It can be used for people who are stressed and overworked, mental health problems, learning difficulties or self-exploration.*

**"the psychological method for transforming energy is the symbol" - Carl Jung**



*Happy Valentine Day!*

### Treatment Issues Addressed with Art

- A. Can't talk about it
- B. Stress response
- C. Shame and Guilt
- D. Self-reference issues
- E. Self-blame
- F. Powerlessness and Helplessness
- G. Loss of safety and Vulnerability
- H. Loss of control
- I. Loss and Betrayal
- J. Fragmentation of body experience
- K. Depression
- L. Aggression
- M. Coping, Reorganizing
- N. Attachment issues
- O. Psychic numbing

- L. Chapman, ATR-BC, RPT-S

## Art-Based Directives

Art therapy can be used for all kinds of problems; developmental, medical and psychological. Some methods such as "mapping" (Hamil, 2009,) help clients to

develop a reparative and coherent story through imagery to sort through trauma memories, cognitive distortions and painful content in a safe way. Drawing

and art use is described by Findler (2009,) such as "tracking" emotional states of kids with universal metaphors, such as volcanoes or storms for anger or fear expressions.

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## Looking forward to Springtime!



recall, an additional concurrent experience that sharply contradicts and disconfirms the expectations and predictions arising from the implicit memory, is created (Ecker, 2010).

Chapman (2000) discussed the neuro-chemical transformation that occurs from using both sides of the brain in order for a person to have a high level of consciousness about the trauma event for healing to occur. She recommends that the non-verbal element is to be addressed first (via art) and then movement is made toward verbal expression. For example, it is important to stimulate the brain stem first because 80% of cognitive ability is reverted to this area during trauma and where distortions in thinking occur. This phase is accomplished through the kinesthetic scribble. The next step is for the client to create the story in a sequence of events, which involves the limbic system where affect comes in prior to defensive cognition that may be suppressive

or repressive to the stored material. After that the telling (verbal) of the story can begin through a coherent narrative. The frontal cortex is now used in retaining therapeutic change. Now comes *the new beginning!* The corpus callosum is involved in the reconstruction from creative synthesis:

*Imagery > symbolism > visualization > language*

Some of the issues to consider in treatment of physical or psychological trauma are the therapist's awareness in working with their clients to provide complete safety. While they help people by making various references to behavior and feelings, they must dose the client's anxiety while addressing their underlying issues. Validation of intense feelings and physical sensations can help to normalize the therapeutic encounter using art.